

GREAT ACTIVITIES

Scope: The opportunities available in the Cadet Program are virtually unlimited, but its nucleus is the weekly squadron meeting. This seminar will begin by examining the components of these routine meetings, as well as how to organize meetings using a quarterly schedule. Next, students will examine activities conducted at the local, wing, and national level, and share success stories from their squadron’s activities in a roundtable discussion. The seminar concludes by reviewing standard management practices used in planning cadet activities.

Format: Informal Lecture and Guided Discussion

Duration: 80 minutes

Objectives:

1. Identify the elements found in routine weekly squadron meetings.
2. Describe the benefits of organizing meetings around a quarterly schedule.
3. Discuss examples of activities, and how their scope differs at the local, wing, and national level.
4. Describe standard practices for managing cadet activities.

Resources: Sample schedule from a weekly squadron meeting; quarterly plan for squadron meetings; handout comparing the scope of cadet activities at different echelons; “Today’s Cadets, Tomorrow’s Aerospace Leaders”; NCSA videos; and PowerPoint slides.



STARTING POINT

[Introduce yourself and state the seminar’s topic.]

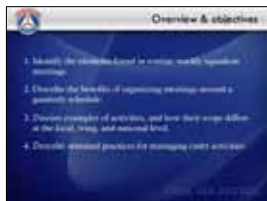


INTRODUCTION

CAP offers many great summer activities that allow cadets to fly, lead, and learn in ways that are unavailable in any other youth organization. But as illustrated in the quote on this slide, the nucleus of the Cadet Program is the weekly squadron meeting. [Next slide]



In fact, exit surveys have repeatedly told us that annual events, no matter how wonderful, will not retain cadets. Having worthwhile weekly meetings is the key.



OVERVIEW

In this seminar, we will look at what makes weekly squadron meetings effective, as well as what weekend and summer activities are available to cadets. Finally, we'll discuss some standard practices that leaders at all echelons should use when planning cadet activities. Throughout the seminar, there will be plenty of time for asking questions and sharing your success stories.



MAIN POINT #1: WEEKLY MEETINGS

[Guided Discussion]

The nucleus of the Cadet Program is the weekly squadron meeting. The sample meeting schedule shown on this slide and in your workbook illustrates the bullet points on this slide. That is, meetings should be 2½ hours, with plenty of hands-on activities – not just drill; *they should be planned well in advance, as shown by the depth of detail in this schedule*; activities should help the cadets accomplish what they need to do to earn promotions; and finally, meetings should be somewhat cumulative, that is what goes on at this week’s meeting ought to dovetail with what the cadets are doing the following week. I encourage you to use the schedule included in your workbook as a template when you and your cadet staff plan weekly squadron meetings.

What are some ways to involve the cadet staff in planning weekly meetings?

[Refer students to the sample schedule included in their workbook. The schedule may give students some ideas about how cadet staff can help plan weekly meetings.]

Anticipated Responses: Having the cadet commander draft the schedule, with adult guidance. Assigning individual cadets to lead portions of the meeting (inspection, drill, etc.). Setting aside time during the meeting for cadet staff and senior staff to plan future activities together. Having cadet staff publicize meeting schedules on the Web, or announcing the schedule to the members of their flights, etc. [Next slide]



We encourage you to use a quarterly schedule when planning weekly meetings. As you see on the slide and in the handout found in your workbook, when using the quarterly schedule, each of your weekly meetings will be built using the same skeleton – an opening formation, emphasis item, core curriculum, etc. – but the activities within those periods will change. During the core curriculum block, one week you’re doing aerospace, another week leadership.

What are some of the benefits of using a quarterly schedule?

Anticipated Responses: It guides your weekly schedules so that you will always know the main thrust of next week’s schedule, thereby aiding in planning. You will be sure to meet all regulatory requirements (ie: safety briefing, character forums, testing, etc.). Every night, you will have nearly an hour for special projects. [Allow students an opportunity to share their own best practices in terms of planning weekly squadron meetings.]

TRANSITION: We’ve discussed how weekly meetings are the nucleus of the Cadet Program, and the level of planning required to make them worthwhile. Next, we’ll look at weekend and summer cadet activities, at the local level and beyond.



MAIN POINT #2: SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

[Guided Discussion]

Special activities are the electives of the Cadet Program. They are the courses, field trips, special projects and once-in-a-lifetime opportunities that cadets enjoy the most about CAP. They exist to allow cadets to apply what they have learned about leadership and aerospace, and see how those academic concepts play-out in the real world. Therefore, cadets who come from strong squadrons will especially benefit from special activities because those cadets bring to the activity a strong foundation in the Cadet Program's core curriculum. Every squadron can offer local activities for all cadets. Higher echelons provide activities for advanced cadets. [Briefly refer students to the handout "Comparing the scope..." found on the slide and in their workbooks. The three items below summarize the main points of that handout.]

A. Local Activities are generally best-suited for weekends. They are self-supported by the squadron, or done in partnership with a neighboring squadron.

B. Wing & Regional Activities are usually week-long activities held during school vacations. Some wings offer weekend activities. At these echelons, activities should harness the talents of a diverse group of people in the wing or region, and have a grander scope than local activities, offering opportunities to cadets beyond what their local squadron is likely to be able to provide.

C. National Cadet Special Activities are week-long events. Almost all are conducted during the summer. They focus on aerospace career explorations, flying, and the study of advanced leadership principles. [Next slide]



What are some good local activities that your unit has had success with? What does another squadron need to know about that activity if they want to follow your lead?

Anticipated Responses: Varies; be well-rounded; always have a project. [Next slide]



Region & Wing Activities offer cadets experiences that are unavailable in their home unit. [If some students are particularly knowledgeable about any of these events, allow them to describe the activity.]

Encampments are a combination of leadership academy and survey of aerospace careers. They are usually 1-week in duration and held on a nearby military installation.

Drill Team & Color Guard Competitions promote sportsmanship and test cadets' academic knowledge, as well as their precision on the drill field.

Region Cadet Leadership Schools challenge cadets to think of leadership as an academic endeavor. It challenges cadets to develop new communication, interpersonal, and management skills.

Conferences: Most wings host an annual conference which should offer special seminars and activities for cadets, guest speakers, and an awards banquet.

Other Events: [Outline the cadet activities hosted by your wing or region.] [Next slide]

[Follow-Up Question]

Why should your squadron participate in wing activities?

Anticipated Responses: No squadron can provide everything a cadet needs on its own; they expose cadets to new opportunities; they give cadets a chance to hear different perspectives on leadership; cadets can make new friends; activities enable cadets to learn from what other squadrons are doing; as cadet staff, cadets can take on greater leadership responsibilities; etc.



National Cadet Special Activities aim to help answer America's call for an aerospace workforce. They allow cadets to develop advanced leadership skills, explore careers in the Air Force or aerospace industry, and fly. [Refer students to the handout seen on the slide, which is included in their workbook.]

[Download and present one or two of the NCSA movies available at cap.gov/cadets.]



In what ways do you see the National Cadet Special Activities program benefiting cadets? America?

Anticipated Responses: Cadets can check out a career that interests them; they will get to meet and be mentored by aerospace professionals; they will see how principles of aerospace science are used to create new technology; etc. America benefits because we need today's cadets to become tomorrow's professionals if America is to perpetuate our nation's global leadership in aviation, space, and technology.

TRANSITION: There are tons of activities at the local, state, and national level. Each is designed to give cadets hands-on opportunities to apply what they have learned during their weekly squadron meetings. Obviously, special activities don't just happen, they require careful planning, which we'll discuss next.



SUMMARY

[Review the main points on the slide.]

The nucleus of the Cadet Program is the weekly squadron meeting. Develop a written schedule every week. Use the quarterly schedule as a guide. Involve the cadet staff. *Do more than just drill! Meetings should be fun and worthwhile.*

Special activities are the electives of the Cadet Program. Every echelon can offer opportunities for cadets to apply what they have learned.

Cadets recognize quality when they see it. Follow standard management practices such as having a publicity plan, specific and measurable objectives, a written schedule, etc. when planning cadet activities.



REMOTIVATION & CLOSING

Weekly meetings matter. Take time to plan them in advance by involving your cadet staff. As evidenced by this quote, if your weekly meetings are worthwhile, your Cadet Program will flourish.